

REDDIFORD SCHOOL

INCLUDING EYFS

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

To be used in conjunction with;

Safeguarding Policy
SCOPE (Staff code of practice and expectations)
Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2023)

Introduction

Governors and the Head Teacher of Reddiford School are committed to delivering a high quality education to pupils and expect high standards of conduct from all staff and contractors. In order to maintain those high standards a culture of openness and accountability is vitally important. The aims of this policy are threefold: -

- to encourage staff to raise concerns about malpractice within the school without fear of reprisal.
- to assure staff that concerns will be taken seriously.
- to provide information about how to raise concerns and explain how the Governors will respond.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all School employees, former employees, agency staff and contractors engaged by the school.

What is Whistleblowing?

In practical terms, whistleblowing occurs when a concern is raised about a danger or illegality that affects others. The person blowing the whistle may not necessarily be directly affected by danger or illegality. Consequently, the whistleblower will not necessarily have a personal interest in the outcome of any investigation into any concerns. This is different from a complaint or grievance. If a complaint or a grievance is lodged, the complainant is saying that s/he has personally been poorly treated. This poor treatment could involve a breach of individual employment rights or bullying and the member of staff is entitled to seek redress for her or himself.

Blowing the Whistle on Malpractice

Malpractice covers a wide range of concerns. The types of activity that should be disclosed include but are not limited to the following: -

- the physical, emotional or sexual abuse of students or staff (Safeguarding concerns)
- financial maladministration
- unauthorised use of School funds
- fraud and corruption
- failure to comply with legal obligations.
- endangering of an individual's health and safety
- other health and safety concerns
- damage to the environment
- a criminal offence
- bribery
- failure to follow financial and contract procedure rules
- showing undue favour to a contractor or a job applicant
- miscarriages of justice
- deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above

Staff should raise their concerns with the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teachers or their line manager as soon as any suspected malpractice becomes apparent. The earlier the concerns are raised the easier it will be to take action.

When reporting a concern, the whistleblower should provide as much information and detail as possible. In particular the full names of the people involved or who knew about what is happening should be provided, including the names of Governors, managers or contractors, dates of events and any relevant documentation. This will help the investigator to focus on the main issues quickly.

There will be some cases where it is not appropriate for staff to raise concerns with the Head Teacher/Line Manager, for example where it is suspected that the Head Teacher/Line Manager already knows about the malpractice and appears to be 'turning a blind eye', or where they may be involved. In those cases, the matter should be reported to the Governors.

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The whistleblower will be advised whether an investigation will take place or not. When making a decision the Head Teacher or any other relevant party will consider whether continuing with an investigation is in the public interest.

Advice and Support

The school recognises that staff may wish to seek advice and support from their professional association or trade union before blowing the whistle and all staff are strongly advised to do so. A representative may also accompany the whistleblower at any meetings.

Confidentiality

The school understands that staff may be reluctant to come forward with information about the wrongdoing of a colleague or manager or indeed at all. As such, the school recognises that whistleblowers may wish to raise concerns in confidence. If the whistleblower makes a request for the matter to be kept confidential then their identity will not be revealed without discussing the matter with them first.

Anonymous Allegations

Whistleblowers are encouraged to give their name when raising concerns. A concern expressed anonymously is much less powerful and is often more difficult to investigate. The decision whether to investigate an anonymous allegation will be made by the Head Teacher and/ or the Chair of Governors. When making this decision they will take into account the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of what is being said and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

Protection for the Whistleblower

All concerns raised under this procedure will be treated seriously and a decision made about whether or not an investigation is appropriate. Depending upon the nature of the matter it may be referred to the external auditor or the police. The person to whom the whistleblower reports their concern will be responsible for keeping the whistleblower informed about the progress of the investigation and the action taken but not necessarily the outcome. In some cases, the investigation may result in criminal or disciplinary proceedings. If this happens the whistleblower may be invited to give a written statement or give evidence at a hearing. The Head Teacher and Governors will support staff in this process and ensure that they are clear about what will happen.

The Head Teacher and Governors will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect staff if they have raised a concern in good faith. Any employee who is found to have victimised or harassed an employee who has raised a concern will face disciplinary action.

Allegations not made in Good Faith

Concerns that are raised frivolously, maliciously, for personal gain or where they are known to be untrue may result in disciplinary action. In the case of contractors, the matter will be reported to the Head Teacher so that a decision can be made about the appropriate action to take.

Blowing the Whistle Outside the School

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to raise concerns outside the school to the appropriate 'prescribed regulator'. This should only be done where the whistleblower is raising a genuine concern and where s/he believes the information is true, i.e., more than just suspicion.

Advice

- Staff are advised to discuss their concerns with a legal advisor, professional association or trade union before reporting them outside the school.
- Staff are strongly encouraged to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone external but before you do, as well as considering the internal help and support available which is identified above, please seek external advice from:
- Protect: If you have any concerns about disclosing a suspected wrongdoing the independent whistleblowing charity Protect, operates a confidential helpline.
- NSPCC: The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 (8.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday) or email help@nspcc.org.uk.
- The media: You should under no circumstances approach a commercial body or the media with details of the suspected wrongdoing. If you approach any such

body and / or where your concern is disclosed in a malicious manner or for personal gain the protection given to you by this procedure may be lost. Additionally, the School may consider this to be gross misconduct and disciplinary action may be taken against you.

Conditions

However, as a last resort staff may choose to raise their concern outside the school to someone other than a prescribed regulator. Staff should only do this if, in addition to the conditions above, they meet one of three preconditions.

Provided the disclosure is reasonable in all the circumstances and is not made for personal gain, the preconditions are that a person:

- reasonably believed that they would be victimised if they raised the matter internally within the School; or
- reasonably believed that the matter would be 'covered up' and there is no prescribed regulator; or
- one has already raised the matter internally or with a prescribed regulator.

External Reporting

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. However, the law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to a relevant outside body including

- the local authority's Designated safeguarding officer.
- Children's Social Care;
- the NSPCC.
- the Health and Safety Executive;
- the Environment Agency;
- the Information Commissioner;
- the Department for Education;
- the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy;
- the Police;
- the Charity Commission;
- the Independent Schools Inspectorate;
- the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)
- the Channel Police Practitioner

Complaints, Grievances and Members

This policy should not be confused with other policies that exist for dealing with complaints or grievances. Employees who are aggrieved about their own employment situation should consider whether to use the grievance procedure after having discussed the matter with their immediate manager and/or their trade union representative.

Detriment

Provided that this procedure is used appropriately and correctly, you will not suffer any detriment as a result of reporting a suspected wrongdoing.

Advice

If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Head Teacher/Senior Management Team, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Protect, the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline or the Modern Slavery helpline.